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# ANALYSIS OF "QUÆRO."

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"QUÆRO" is an essay in which certain questions relating to matter, energy, intelligence, and evolution are mooted, the purpose being to ascertain whether recent advances in physical and biologic science can be held to have shaken the grounds for the old faith in the existence and rule of a Supreme and Intelligent Power. Materialism, in its modern form, is taken as that theory of the universe which, excluding or ignoring this existence and rule, seeks to explain all phenomena of matter, energy, and intelligence in terms of matter and energy only. This view is examined in the first two chapters of the book. In the 3rd and 4th chapters another line of argument is adopted with the intent to meet agnostic difficulties. Agnosticism is regarded as mainly a system of suspended judgment and doubt, reasonable and useful when moderate, but pushed at the present day to an extreme which is paralysing to thought and productive of unnecessary darkness.

Throughout the enquiry the teachings of sacred books and tradition are purposely avoided, the object being to find out, if possible, simply what science and reason have to say. The essay is written in popular form, and is addressed to the mass of thoughtful educated people who, though not deeply versed in science, are well able to gauge the value of the arguments advanced.

## PART I.

Chap. I. ("Is Evolution Automatic?") deals with modern views of Matter and Energy (pp. 1 to 16), and shows that, as regarded by science, these two Factors make no provision for that consummate intelligence which (unless our own intelligence forever plays us false) is everywhere manifest in the order, intricate relationships, and harmony of Nature. Matter may be regarded either as 'inert' and dependent on associated energy for any activities which it displays, or as endowed from the first with certain *properties*: but it is devoid of intelligence. Energy, again, as defined by science (pp. 5 and 27) is *physical* only; therefore equally devoid of intelligence. Nor is there scientific ground for believing that any combination of matter and energy can, of itself, evolve intelligence. True, this appears ultimately in animal protoplasm as the 'protoplasmic mind,' but it is late and, at first, lowly—even ridiculous, if held to have taken any part in that marvellous display of intelligence which occurred in non-organic Nature long antecedent to protoplasm in any shape, and entirely beyond its sphere, then and always. This view is worked out on three lines—the *advent and history of the elements,* as these are recognised by chemists (pp. 16 to 20)—the early appearance and phenomena of *Life* (pp. 21 to 24)—and of *Mind* in association with protoplasm (pp. 25 to 27).

The conclusion is that no kind of Automatism, as it may be supposed to exist between matter and energy, offers a complete and satisfactory explanation of the phenomena of Nature ; that automatism in any form implies constructive and controlling intelligence ; that neither matter nor energy, as defined by science, supplies such intelligence, and therefore, that this must be posited as a third Factor, by the side of matter and energy, in any adequate theory of the universe. But if this be the case, Materialism, which admits only matter and energy, has to go a-begging for intelligence. It is driven to invent imaginary 'potentialities,' or call to its aid the 'anima mundi' of Pantheism. It has to clothe 'energised matter' with attribute after attribute until matter is practically deified. Then there is another God : where is the gain ?

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In Chapter II. ("Is Evolution Power, or Mandate ?") an enquiry is made as to whether the Materialist is helped out of the foregoing quandary by the modern view of Evolution. This is denied on the ground that evolution, however important, is method or process only; is not in itself an agent or power, but merely constitutes the way in which such agent or power has acted.

The great value of Darwinian evolution is fully admitted, and its relation to matter, energy, and intelligence is traced out. With respect to the 'energised matter' of Materialism, it is shown that evolution cannot be invoked to account for any supposed power of 'self-development.' Such potentiality must first be assumed; then evolution becomes the way in which it operates. Evolution can account for neither matter, energy, nor intelligence; its task is to register the method and results of their co-operation (pp. 45–48).

Moreover, Materialism has no monopoly in evolution. This is equally ready to serve Agnosticism, Spencerism, or Theism. As guide and interpreter, it ultimately leads us into the presence of its masters—a scientific trinity of matter, energy, and intelligence. Shall we accept this triumvirate as final? Or shall we look beyond it for one Supreme Source from which these three factors spring? If we close with the belief in an Infinite and Intelligent Power which produces and sustains the universe, science will certainly not gainsay us, and the reason of many will be satisfied.

## PART II.

In Chapters III. and IV. a different line of argument is used. It is based on a series of simple physiological and psychological data, and illustrated by diagram and experiment. Of late years, the agnostic difficulties which beset all human knowledge have been expanded into a system of negation often found in alliance with materialism, though it may be a rival and foe. In view of these difficulties, an attempt is here made to show the means and method whereby we acquire knowledge of any thing or being external to ourselves, the evidence on which such knowledge rests, its scope, and its inevitable limitations.

In Chapter III. ("Kinetics and Metakinetics of a Brain-cell") certain simple forms of neuro-psychism or cerebration are discussed, the *relation of consciousness to external objects* being selected for special examination (p. 55). To prepare the way for this, the phenomena of 'reflex' (non-conscious) nerve action are briefly outlined, and upon these the psychism of consciousness is presently grafted. Starting from 'consciousness' as a fundamental fact of which everyone, for himself, is perfectly certain and without proof, the first step is to associate it with the molecular brain-protoplasm, thus constituting what the author calls the

" conscious nerve-area " or "protoplasmic mind" (p. 56). The nerve-routes by which this conscious and perceiving nerve-area is connected with the external world are then indicated, and the relations between 'sense-perceptions,' 'sense-impressions,' and the external 'excitants' or influences producing these, are examined. The mode in which our *perception* of an external object becomes our *conception* of that object is then discussed, and it is shown that what we deal with in the conscious nerve-area is, not the object itself ('Ding an sich'), but certain phenomena which the object gives rise to, and which influence (excite) the sense-routes (nerves) and perceiving nerve-area in such way as results in '~~conceptional~~ nceptual' images' or presentations of external objects.

Such concept~~ional~~ual images or presentments are taken, by uninstructed people, to be *the objects themselves*, and it is not quite easy to realise that what we are dealing with is, not the object itself, but only certain sense-impressions which it gives rise to, and which, on reaching the conscious nerve-area, are therein construed as a concept~~ional~~ual image or presentment of the object. Science, however, insists on this, and a little consideration will show that the nervous mechanism permits of no other arrangement (Sections 3, 4, and 5 of Chap. III.). The difficulty is amusingly illustrated in a conversation between a workman and a scientist, at pages 89 to 96.

It is none the less true, however, that 'Reality'

(Sections 5, 6, and 7) exists behind every group of phenomena, whether these constitute what we call a chair or a table, a house, a man, a world, or an universe. Unless we admit this, we are bound to deny, equally, the reality of our arms, legs, eyes, ears, nerve-routes, and nerve-protoplasm, since all these are equally external to consciousness. On this line, that very certain thing, bodily existence, becomes uncertain, and consciousness shrinks to an empty phantom. But if we cannot reconcile ourselves to this, we must admit a reality behind every group of phenomena which produces sense-impressions and rouses consciousness. The evidence for the existence of a real sun is exactly of the same nature as for the existence of a real right arm ; not so intimate nor immediately convincing, it may be, but clearly resting on the same basis, viz., sense-impressions and their conversion into conceptions. It may be added that it is contrary to reason to imagine that the unquestionable influences (excitants), which reach us from an external world, take their origin in nothing and come from nowhere. A real cause for them *must* be postulated, and this cause is the Reality or Noumenon behind every appearance or phenomenon. In this way a series is set up and may be expressed thus :—Reality (noumenon) →excitant (manifestation, phenomenon)→sense-impression→consciousness→conception.

In Sections 6 and 7 the meaning and scope of 'Reality' are discussed. It is regarded as the underlying basis of all phenomena, whether physical or psychic. The fact of our being entirely ignorant of its essential nature need be no bar to its acceptance, seeing we unhesitatingly admit the existence and operation of many things the nature of which is unknown to us ; of this, matter and energy are notorious instances. As to the *unity* of Reality, the author contends that it is natural, in conformity with what we know of matter and energy, and must be accepted ; otherwise, inasmuch as each atom of matter and every unit of force has to be provided for, we are confronted with the alternative of inconceivable hosts of separate and independent realities. The phenomena of psychism belong, of course, to a different category, but for them, also, it is submitted that the basis of reality is indispensable.

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In the last chapter, the "Theory of a Supreme Noumenon" is treated. For the most part, the Agnostic will go as far as the Reality underlying phenomena : after that, and respecting that, all for him is dark, beyond our ken, "unknowable." This position is held to be untenable, unless by "unknowable" is meant incomprehensible. As well charge the physicist with knowing nothing about matter because he is confessedly ignorant of its nature. Then we have a measure; too big for us, no doubt, but still a measure. If reality underlie all appearance, if noumenon stand behind every phenomenon, then either must be at least co-extensive with the universe: but this, for us, is limitless, therefore so also is the basis on which it rests. If the duration of the universe be incalculable, so also is the duration of that on which it depends. If energy be inexhaustible, so also must its source be. If the phenomena of intelligence, whether general or protoplasmic, equally demand a real noumenon, then this must itself be intelligent or inclusive of intelligence. We need not be overawed by a term—be it adjective or noun—to which a semi-technical significance has been attached. If existence, manifestation, universality, attribute, and relation can be predicated of the so-called "unknowable," then we have definite and valuable knowledge respecting it; defective and limited, no doubt, as all human knowledge is, but something very different from absolute ignorance. Comprehension there can never be for finite man, apprehension there may be. Is all this mere theory? Science is continually using theory and hypothesis to harmonise and advance her discoveries. Have we inadvertently passed from physics to thought? That is no novelty. Everyone does it scores of times a day. The mysterious transition takes place in the simplest conception we form of an external object. Nor is the use of reason limited to the appraisal of sense-perceptions. This is but a part of its work. Amongst other occupations, it has, rightly or wrongly, been engaged in formulating the conception of a Supreme Noumenon, in every age and place of which we have a record. With what success remains to be seen.

Several current views of a 'Supreme Noumenon' are next examined. They range from the blank denial of Atheism, through Agnosticism, Materialism, Pantheism, and Spencerism, up to the conceptions of Theism (pp. 127 to 144). All are anthropic, and all, except atheism, more or less anthropomorphic. This is inevitable, and blameless unless to be human is a reproach. 'Anthropomorphism' is a bogey which need not alarm us, for the output of our mental instrument must necessarily bear the impress of the agent which fashions it (pp. 128–9). A similar argument is used to meet the objection of 'Personality,' where this enters into the conceptions of Theism (pp. 130 to 137).

Theism, and its development in Christianity, are criticised, even sharply; not, of course, in their conceptions, nor in the standard of ethics and morality they inculcate, all of which are here recognised as the highest and purest that man has attained; but on account of the slow and partial way in which they reach and influence humanity ; this failure is attributed in part to defective methods of teaching (pp. 145 to 154). It is further submitted that, with the exception of Atheism, the various forms of thought here reviewed, inclusive of Theism, have a common natural basis and touch each other at several points. After cross-questioning the inhabitants of the Adullamite cave of "Naturalism" (p. 139) to which all non-theists are relegated, their treasures are ransacked (p. 156). Amongst considerable rubbish, most of it harmless, certain jewels are found ; such are conscience, ethics, morality, a sense of duty and responsibility, and an acceptance of law, social and moral, as well as physical. Whether these treasures have been 'evolved,' or communicated, is really of little consequence. They exist, and have grown up inextricably interwoven with the religious instinct of man. It is suggested that they form an excellent basis for 'natural religion' and, if supplemented by the recognition of a Supreme Power, go a long way towards Theism. "Naturalism," far from being the antagonist of religion, is thus held to be its ally ; 'natural religion,' as manifest in the moral and ethical development of man, may well be the congenial soil in which the higher conceptions of theo-christianity may take root and flourish. For those who, from scientific or metaphysical objection, or from any other cause, cannot as yet honestly accept Theism, it is suggested that there is, none the less, a peaceful ground on which science and religion can meet. It is indicated in a summing-up by Mr. Spencer, which may be taken as at least an interim solution of the problem :—

"But one truth must grow ever clearer—the truth that there is an Inscrutable Existence everywhere manifested to which he" (man of science) "can neither find nor conceive either beginning or end. Amid the mysteries which become the more mysterious the more they are thought about, there will remain the one absolute certainty, that he is ever in presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed." ("Principles of Sociology" (1896), page 175.)

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